



Wilhelm Hauff

Little Muck

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In Nicea, my beloved father-city, lived a man, whom people called "Little Muck." Though at that time I was quite young, I can recollect him very well, particularly since, on one occasion, I was flogged almost to death, by my father, on his account. The Little Muck, even then, when I knew him, an old man, was nevertheless but three or four feet high: he had a singular figure, for his body, little and smart as it was, carried a head much larger and thicker than that of others. He lived all alone in a large house, and even cooked for himself; moreover, it would not have been known in the city whether he was alive or dead, (for he went forth but once in four weeks,) had not every day, about the hour of noon, strong fumes come forth from the house. Nevertheless, in the evening he was often to be seen walking to and fro upon his roof; although, from the street, it seemed as if it were his head alone that was running around there.

I and my comrades were wicked fellows, who teased and ridiculed every one; accordingly, to us it was a holiday when the Little Muck went forth: on the appointed day we would assemble before his house, and wait for him to come out.

When, then, the door opened, and at first the immense head and still larger turban peered forth, when the rest of the body followed covered with a small cloak which had been irregularly curtailed, with wide pantaloons, and a broad girdle in which hung a long dagger, so long that one could not tell whether Muck was fastened to the dagger, or the dagger to Muck—when in this guise he came forth, then would the air resound with our cries of joy; then would we fling our caps aloft, and dance round him, like mad. Little Muck, however, would salute us with a serious bow, and walk with long strides through the street, shuffling now and then his feet, for he wore large wide slippers, such as I have never elsewhere seen. We boys would run behind him, crying continually, "Little Muck! Little Muck!" We also had a droll little verse, which we would now and then sing in his honor; it ran thus:—

"Little Muck, oh Little Muck!

What a fine, brave dwarf art thou!

Livest in a house so tall;

Goest forth but once a month,
Mountain-headed, though so small.
Turn thyself but once, and look!
Run, and catch us, Little Muck."

In this way had we often carried on our sport, and, to my shame, I must confess that I took the most wicked part in it, for I often plucked him by the mantle, and once trod from behind on his large slippers, so that he fell down. This was, at first, a source of the greatest amusement to me, but my laughter soon ceased when I saw the Little Muck go up to my father's house; he walked straight in, and remained there some time. I concealed myself near the door, and saw Muck come forth again, escorted by my father, who respectfully shook his hand, and with many bows parted with him at the door. My mind was uneasy, and I remained some time in my concealment; at length, however, hunger, which I feared more than blows, drove me in, and ashamed and with downcast head, I walked in before my father.

"Thou hast, as I hear, insulted the good Muck," said he with a very serious tone. "I will tell thee the history of this Muck, and then I am sure thou wilt ridicule him no more. But first, thou shalt receive thy allowance." The allowance was five-and-twenty lashes, which he took care to count only too honestly. He thereupon took a long pipe-stem, unscrewed the amber mouthpiece, and beat me more severely than he had ever done before.

When the five-and-twenty were all made up, he commanded me to attend, and told me the following story of Little Muck.

The father of Little Muck, who is properly called Mukrah, lived here in Nicea, a respectable, but poor man. He kept himself almost as retired as his son does now. The latter he could not endure, because he was ashamed of his dwarfish figure, and let him therefore grow up in perfect ignorance. When the Little Muck was still in his seventeenth year, a merry child, his father, a grave man, kept continually reproaching him, that he, who ought long before to have trodden down the shoes of infancy, was still so stupid and childish.

The old man, however, one day had a bad fall, from the effects of which he died, and Little Muck was left behind, poor and ignorant. His cruel relations, to whom the deceased owed more than he could pay, turned the poor fellow out of the house, and advised him to go forth into the world, and seek his fortune. Muck answered that he was already, only asking them for his father's dress, which they willingly granted him. His father had been a large, portly man, and the garments on that account did not fit him. Muck, however, soon hit upon an expedient; he cut off what was too long, and then put them on. He seemed, however, to have forgotten that he must also take from their width; hence the strange dress that he wears at the present day; the huge turban, the broad girdle, the wide breeches, the blue cloak, all these he has inherited from his father, and worn ever since. The long Damascus dagger of his father, too, he attached to his girdle, and seizing a little staff, set out from the door.



Gayly he wandered, the whole day, for he had set out to seek his fortune: if he saw upon the ground a potsherd shining in the sunlight, he took care to pick it up, in the belief that he could change it into a diamond of the first water; if he saw in the distance the cupola of a Mosque sparkling like fire, or the sea glittering like a mirror, he would hasten up, fully persuaded that he had arrived at fairy-land. But ah! these phantoms vanished as he approached, and too soon fatigue, and his stomach gnawed by hunger, convinced him that he was still in the land of mortals. In this way he travelled two days, in hunger and grief, and despaired of finding his fortune; the produce of the field was his only support, the hard earth [Pg 146]his bed. On the morning of the third day, he espied a large city upon an eminence. Brightly shone the crescent upon her pinnacles, variegated flags waved over the roofs, and seemed to be beckoning Little Muck to themselves. In surprise he stood still, contemplating the city and the surrounding country.

"There at length will Klein-Muck find his fortune," said he to himself, and in spite of his fatigue bounded in the air; "there or nowhere!" He collected all his strength, and walked towards the city. But although the latter seemed quite near, he could not reach it until mid-day, for his little limbs almost entirely refused him their assistance, and he was obliged to sit down to rest in the shade of a palm-tree. At last he reached the gate; he fixed the mantle jauntily, wound the turban still more tastily around his head, made the girdle broader, and arranged the dagger so as to fall still more obliquely: then, wiping the dust from his shoes, and seizing his cane, he marched bravely through the gate.



He had already wandered through a few streets, but nowhere did any door open to him, nowhere did any one exclaim, as he had anticipated: "Little Muck, come in and eat and drink, and rest thy little feet."

He was looking very wistfully straight at a large fine house, when a window opened, and an old woman, putting out her head, exclaimed in a singing tone—

"Hither, come hither!

The porridge is here;

The table I've spread,

Come taste of my cheer.

Hither, come hither!

The porridge is hot;

Your neighbors bring with you,

To dip in the pot!"



The door opened, and Muck saw many dogs and cats walking in. For a moment he stood in doubt whether he should accept the invitation; at last, however, he took heart and entered the mansion. Before him proceeded a couple of genteel kittens, and he resolved to follow them, since they, perhaps, knew the way to the kitchen better than himself.



When Muck had ascended the steps, he met the same old woman who had looked forth from the window. With frowning air she asked what he wanted.

"Thou hast invited everyone to thy porridge," answered Little Muck, "and as I was very hungry, I came too."



The old woman laughed, saying, "Whence come you then, strange fellow? The whole city knows that I cook for no one but my dear cats, and now and then, as you see, I invite their companions from the neighbourhood." Little Muck told her how hard it had gone with him since his father's death, and entreated her to let him dine, that day, with her cats. The old woman, on whom the frank relation of the little fellow made quite an impression, permitted him to become her guest, and gave him abundance to eat and drink. When he was satisfied and refreshed, she looked at him for some time, and then said:—

"Little Muck, remain with me in my service; you will have little to do, and shall be well taken care of."



Muck, who had relished the cat-porridge, agreed, and thus became the servant of the Frau Ahavzi. His duties were light but singular: Frau Ahavzi had two male, and four female cats; every morning Little Muck had to comb their hair, and anoint them with costly ointment. When the Frau went out, he had to give them all his attention; when they ate, he placed their bowls before them; and, at night, he had to lay them on silken cushions, and wrap them up in velvet coverings. There were, moreover, a few little dogs in the house, on which he was obliged to wait; but there were not so many ceremonies gone through with these as with the cats, whom Frau Ahavzi treated as her own children. As for the rest, Muck led as retired a life as in his father's house, for with the exception of the Frau, he saw every day only dogs and cats.

For a long time it went very well with Little Muck; he had enough to eat, and but little to do; and the old woman seemed to be perfectly satisfied with him. But, by-and-by, the cats began to behave very badly; the moment the Frau went out, they ran around the rooms as if possessed, threw down every thing in confusion, and broke considerable fine crockery, which stood in their way.

When, however, they heard their mistress coming up the steps, they would creep to their cushions, and wag their tails, when they saw her, as if nothing had happened. The Frau Ahavzi always fell in a passion when she saw her rooms so disordered, and attributed all to Muck; assert his innocence as he might, she believed her cats who looked so demure, in preference to her servant. Little Muck was very sorry that here also he had been disappointed in finding his fortune, and determined in his own mind to leave the service of the Frau Ahavzi. As, however, on his first journey, he had learned how badly one lives without money, he resolved to procure, in some way, for himself the wages which his mistress had once promised him, but had never paid. In the house of the Frau Ahavzi was a room, which was always closed, and the inside of which he had never seen. Nevertheless, he had often heard the Frau making a noise therein, and he would have willingly risked his life to know what was there concealed. Reflecting upon his travelling-money, it occurred to him that there his mistress might conceal her treasures. But the door was always tightly closed, and therefore he could not get at them.

One morning, after the Frau Ahavzi had gone out, one of the little dogs who was treated by her in a very stepmother-like manner, but whose favor he had in a great degree gained by various acts of kindness, pulled him by his wide pantaloons, and acted as if he wanted Muck to follow him. Muck, who always gladly played with him, did so, and perceived that the dog was leading him to the sleeping apartment of his mistress; he stopped before a door, which the little fellow had never before observed, and which was now wide open. The dog entered, and Muck, following, was overjoyed at finding himself in the very chamber, which had so long been the object of his curiosity. He looked all around for money, but could find none: old garments only, and strangely-fashioned vases were scattered around. One of the latter, in particular, attracted his attention; it was of crystal, and fine figures were cut thereon. He lifted it up and turned it on all sides; but, oh horror! he had not observed that it had a lid, which was but insecurely fastened on: it fell to the floor, and broke into a thousand pieces.



For a long time stood Little Muck motionless through terror; now was his fate decided, now must he fly, or be killed by the old woman. His departure was immediately resolved on; he only looked around, to see if he could not use some of the goods of the Frau Ahavzi upon his journey. Thereupon, a formidable pair of huge slippers met his eye; they were not, it is true, beautiful, but his own could hold out no longer; moreover their size was an inducement, for when he had these upon his feet, people would see, he hoped, that he had cast off the shoes of childhood. He quickly took off his own slippers, and put on the others. A walking-stick, also, with a fine lion's head cut upon the handle, seemed to be standing too idly in the corner; so he seized it, and hurried from the apartment. He hastened to his own room, put on his cloak, arranged his paternal turban, placed the dagger in his girdle, and ran as fast as his feet would carry him, out of the house, and out of the city.



Fear of his old mistress drove him farther and still farther, until, from fatigue, he could scarcely run any more. He had never gone so quickly in his life; nay, it appeared to him as if he could not cease running, for an invisible power seemed propelling him on. At last he observed that this must be connected with the slippers, for they would continually shoot forward and bear him along with them.



He endeavoured in various ways, to stand still, but could not succeed; at last, in the greatest distress, he cried out to himself, as a man calls to his horse, "Wo—wo!" Then the slippers stopped, and Muck fell exhausted upon the earth.

The slippers were a source of great joy to him. Thus had he, by his services, gained something that would help him on his way through the world to seek his fortune. In spite of his joy, he fell asleep through fatigue; for the body of Little Muck, which had to carry so heavy a head, could not hold out long. In his dream the little dog appeared to him, which had assisted him to the slippers in the house of the Frau Ahavzi, and thus spoke:—

"Dear Muck, thou dost not still rightly understand the use of the slippers: know that if, in them, thou turnest thyself three times around upon the heel, thou canst fly wherever thou wilt; and with the staff thou canst find treasures, for, wherever gold is buried, it will beat three times upon the earth; where silver, twice."

Thus dreamed Little Muck. When he awoke, he reflected on the singular vision, and resolved to make the experiment immediately. He put on the slippers, lifted one foot, and began to turn around upon his heel. But whoever has attempted to perform this maneuverer in an enormously wide slipper, will not wonder that the Little Muck could not succeed, particularly when he remembers that his heavy head kept falling on this side and on that.

The poor little fellow fell several times violently upon his nose; nevertheless, that did not deter him from making the trial again, and at last he succeeded. Like a wheel he went around upon his heel, wishing himself in the nearest large city, and—the slippers mounted into the air, ran with the speed of the wind through the clouds, and before Little Muck knew what to make of it, he found himself in a large market-place, where many stalls were erected, and innumerable men were busily running to and fro.

He moved among the people, but considered it more prudent to retire into a less frequented street, for near the market one of the slippers bore him along so rapidly, that he almost fell down, or else ran against one and another with his projecting dagger, so that it was with difficulty he avoided their blows.



Little Muck now seriously reflected what he should set about, in order to earn a piece of money. He had, it is true, a staff which would show him concealed treasures, but how could he find a place where gold or silver was buried. He could, indeed, in this emergency, have exhibited himself for money, but for this he was too proud. At last the quickness of his gait occurred to him. Perhaps, thought he, my slippers can procure me support, and he determined to hire himself out as a courier. He ventured to hope that the king of the city rewarded such service well, so he inquired for the palace. Before the door of the palace stood a guard, who asked him what he sought there. On answering that he was in search of service, they led him to the overseer of the slaves. Before this one he laid his request, and entreated that he might be admitted among the royal couriers. The overseer measured him with his eyes from head to foot, and said: "How! with thy little feet, which are scarcely a span long, wishest thou to become a royal messenger? Away with thee! I cannot play with every fool."

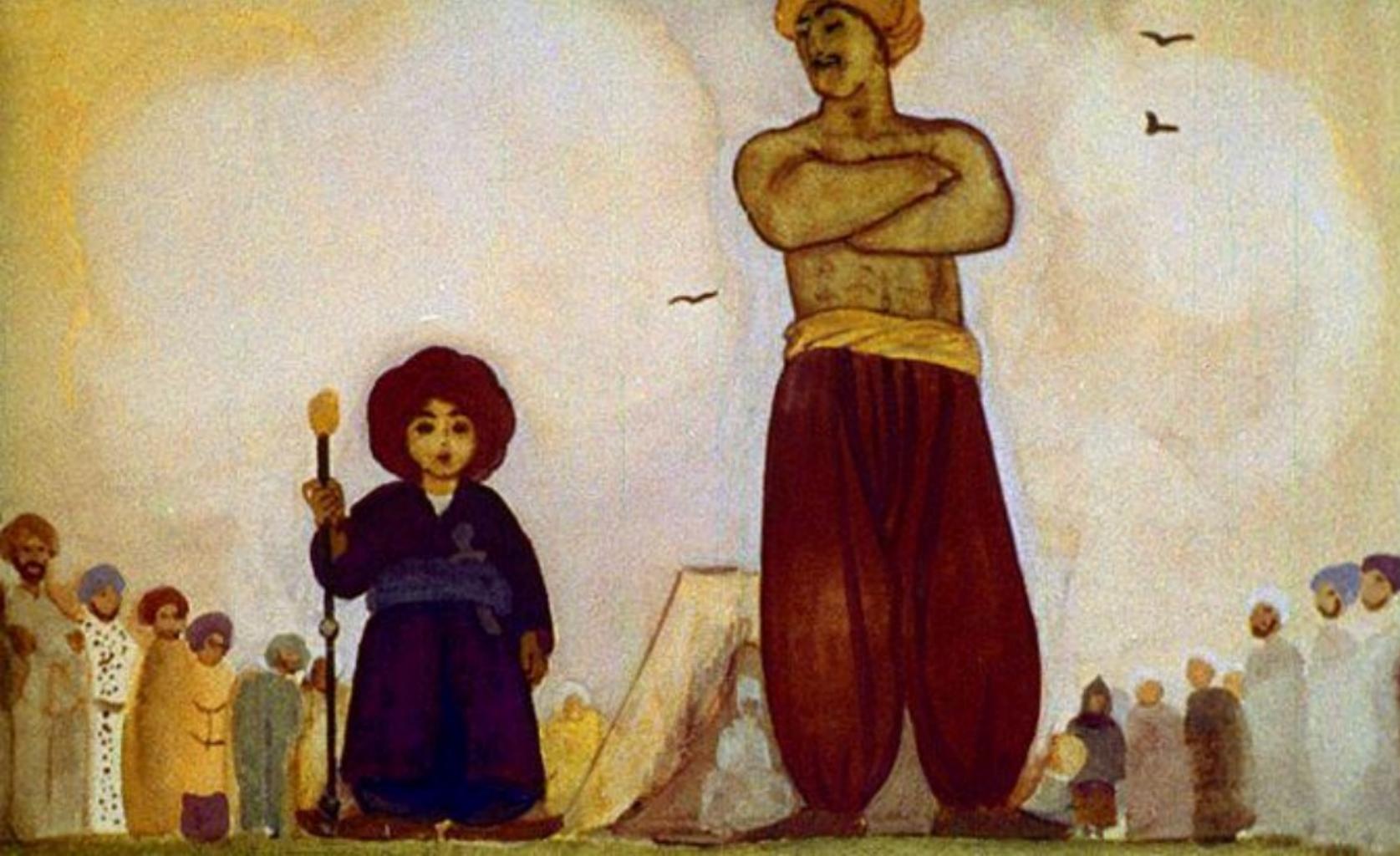


Little Muck assured him, however, that his proposal was made in perfect seriousness, and that he would let it come to a trial with the swiftest, upon a wager. The matter seemed very ludicrous to the overseer. He commanded him to hold himself in readiness for a race in the afternoon, and leading him into the kitchen, saw that he was furnished with proper meat and drink. He himself, however, repaired unto the king, and told him of the little man and his proposal. The king was a merry lord, and therefore it pleased him well that the overseer had kept the little man for their amusement. He directed him to make preparations in a large meadow behind the castle, that the race might be conveniently beheld by his whole court, and once more commanded him to take great care of the dwarf. The king told his princes, and princesses, what a pastime they were to enjoy that afternoon; these told it again to their attendants, and when the time arrived all were in great expectation; and as many as had feet poured into the meadow, where a scaffolding had been erected, in order to see the boastful dwarf run.



As soon as the king and his sons and daughters had taken their places upon the platform, the Little Muck walked forth upon the meadow, and made before the noble sovereign a very elegant bow.

A universal cry of joy arose, the moment they beheld the little fellow; such a figure had they never seen. The small body with the mighty head, the little cloak, and the wide pantaloons, the long dagger in the broad girdle, the tiny feet in the immense slippers—no! it was so droll a sight they could not keep from laughing aloud. Little Muck, however, was not disconcerted by their laughter. He proudly walked forward, supported by his cane, and awaited his opponent.



At Muck's own desire, the overseer of
the slaves had selected the best runner.
Walking in, he placed himself near the dwarf,
and both looked for the signal.



Thereupon the Princess Amarza made a sign with her veil as had been preconcerted, and, like two arrows shot from the same bow, the racers flew over the meadow.

At first the courier took a tremendous bound, but Muck pursued him in his slipper carriage, overtook him, passed him, and had been standing for some time at the goal, when his opponent, gasping for breath, ran up.



Amazement for a few moments enchanted the spectators: the king was the first to clap his hands; then shouted the crowd for joy, all exclaiming, "Long live the Little Muck, the victor in the race!"



Meanwhile they had brought up the little man; he prostrated himself before the king, saying, "Most mighty King, I have here given thee but a small proof of my powers; allow them, I pray thee, to give me a place among thy couriers." The king answered:—

"Nay, dear Muck, thou shalt be my favourite messenger, and shalt remain about my person; every year shalt thou have a hundred gold pieces as thy wages, and thou shalt sup at the table of my first attendant."



Then Muck thought he had at last found the fortune, of which he had so long been in search, and was merry and light-hearted. Moreover, he rejoiced in the peculiar favour of the king, for the latter employed him on his quickest and most secret errands, which he performed with the greatest care, and with inconceivable rapidity.

But the other attendants of the king were not well affected towards him, because they reluctantly saw themselves displaced from their lord's favor by a dwarf, who knew how to do nothing, but to run fast. They set on foot many a conspiracy against him in order to work his destruction, but all failed, through the confidence which the king placed in his private Oberleiblaufer, (for to this dignity had he in so short a time arrived.)



Muck, upon whom these movements against himself produced no effect, thought not of revenge; for that he had too good a heart: no, he reflected upon the means of making himself necessary to his enemies, and beloved by them. Thereupon the staff, which in his good fortune he had forgotten, occurred to him; if he could find treasures, he thought the lords would be more favourably disposed towards him. He had before this often heard that the father of the present king had buried much of his gold, when the enemy had invaded the land; they said, moreover, that he had died without imparting the secret to his son. From this time Muck always carried his cane, in the hope that he would some time pass over the place where the money of the old king was buried.



One evening, chance led him into a remote portion of the castle-garden, which he seldom visited, when suddenly he felt the staff move in his hand, and three times it beat upon the ground. He knew in an instant what this indicated; accordingly he drew forth his dagger, made marks on the surrounding trees, and then slipped back into the castle. Then he procured a spade, and awaited night for his undertaking.

Treasure-digging, however, gave Muck more trouble than he had anticipated. His arms were very feeble, his spade large and heavy; he might perhaps have been labouring a couple of hours, without getting any farther down than as many feet. At length he hit upon something hard, which sounded like iron: he then set to work still more diligently, and soon brought up a large cover; he then descended into the hole, in order to examine what the cover concealed, and found a large pot completely full of gold pieces.

His feeble wisdom, however, did not teach him to lift up the pot; but he put in his pantaloons and girdle as much as he could carry, filled his cloak, and then carefully covering up the rest, placed the load upon his back. But, indeed, if he had not had the slippers on his feet, he could not have stirred, so heavily did the gold weigh him down. Then, unobserved, he reached his room, and secured the money under the cushions of his sofa.



When the little man saw so much gold in his possession, he thought the tables would now be turned, and that from among his enemies at court, he could gain many well-wishers and warm friends. But even in this, one could see that the good Muck had enjoyed no very careful education; otherwise he would not have imagined that he could buy true friends with gold. Ah! that he had then put on his slippers, and with his mantle full of gold, scampered away!

The gold which from this time Little Muck distributed with lavish hand, awakened the envy of the other court-attendants. The kitchen-master, Ahuli, said, "He is a counterfeiter." The slave-overseer, Achmet, said, "He has cajoled the king." But Archaz, the treasurer, his most wicked enemy, who himself, even, now and then put his hand into his lord's coffers, exclaimed, "He is a thief."



In order to be sure of the thing, they consulted together, and the head cup-bearer, Korchuz, placed himself one day, with a very sorrowful and depressed air, before the eyes of the king. He made his wo so apparent, that the king asked him what was the matter.

"Ah!" answered he, "I am sorry that I have lost the favor of my lord!"

"Why talkest thou idly, friend Korchuz?" rejoined the monarch. "Since when have I veiled from thee the sun of my favour?"

The cup-bearer answered, that he loaded his private Oberleiblaufer with money, but gave his poor faithful servants nothing. The king was much astonished at this accusation, had the story of Muck's gold-distribution told him, and the conspirators soon aroused in him the suspicion that the dwarf had, in some way or other, stolen the money from the treasure-chamber. Very pleasant was this turn of the matter to the treasurer, who would not otherwise have willingly submitted his accounts to examination.



The king thereupon commanded that they should secretly watch all the movements of the dwarf, in order, if possible, to surprise him in the act. When, now, on the night which followed the fatal day, seeing his funds almost exhausted by his generosity, Muck crept forth, with his spade, into the castle-garden, to bring new supplies from his secret treasury, the watch followed him in the distance, led by Ahuli and Archaz; and, at the moment when he was removing the gold from the pot to his cloak, they fell upon him, bound him, and immediately led him before the king.



The latter, whom, independently of anything else, this interruption of his sleep would have enraged, received his poor dwarf very ungraciously, and ordered an immediate trial. Meanwhile they had dug the full pot out of the ground, and with the spade and cloak full of gold had placed it before the king. The treasurer said that he had surprised Muck with his guard, just as he had buried this vessel of gold in the earth.

The king thereupon inquired of the accused, whether it was true, and whence the gold had come.

Little Muck, conscious of innocence, answered that he had discovered this pot in the garden; that he had not buried it, but had brought it to light.

All present laughed aloud at this defence; the king, however, provoked in the highest degree by the supposed impudence of the dwarf, exclaimed, "How, wretch! wilt thou so stupidly and shamelessly lie to thy king, after having stolen from him? Treasurer Archaz, I command thee to say whether thou knows this sum of gold to be the same that is missing from my treasury."



The treasurer thereupon answered that he was sure of the thing; that so much and even more had been missing from the royal treasures; and he could take his oath that this was the stolen money. Then the king commanded them to place Little Muck in galling chains, and convey him to prison: to Archaz, however, he gave the gold, that he might restore it to the treasury. Delighted at the fortunate issue of the matter, the officer took it, and counted out, at home, the glittering gold pieces; but the bad man never disclosed that down in the pot lay a letter, to the following purport:—

“The enemy has overrun my land; therefore I here conceal a portion of my treasure. Whoever may find it, the curse of his king fall upon him, if he do not immediately deliver it to my son!

King Sadi.”



In his dungeon, poor Muck gave way to sorrowful reflections; he knew that for taking royal property death was the penalty; and yet—he could not betray the secret of his staff unto the king, because, in that case, he justly feared being deprived of both that, and his slippers. His slippers, alas! could render him no help, for there by close fetters he was fastened to the wall, and, torment himself as he might, he could not turn around upon his heel.

When, however, on the next day, sentence of death was pronounced, he thought it would be better to live without the magic staff, than to die with it; and, having asked a private audience with the king, disclosed to him the secret. At first the king gave no credit to his assertions, but Little Muck promised him a proof, if he would respite him from death.



The king gave him his word upon it, and having had some gold buried in the earth, unseen by Muck, commanded him to find it with his cane. In a few moments he succeeded in doing so, for the staff beat three times distinctly upon the ground. Then the king saw that his treasurer had betrayed him, and sent him, as is customary in the East, a silken cord, wherewith he should strangle himself. To Little Muck, however, he said:—

“I have indeed promised thee thy life, but it seems to me that this is not the only secret thou art possessed of, connected with this staff. Therefore thou shalt remain in everlasting captivity, if thou do not confess what relation exists between it and thy rapid running.”



Little Muck, whom one night in his dungeon had deprived of all desire for further confinement, acknowledged that his whole art lay in the slippers; nevertheless, he informed not the king of the wonderful effect of turning three times upon the heel. The king put on the slippers, himself, in order to make the experiment, and ran, like mad, through the garden; often did he wish to hold up, but he knew not how to bring the slippers to a halt, and Muck, who could not deny himself this revenge, let him run on, until he fell down exhausted.



When the king returned to consciousness, he was terribly angry at Little Muck, who had suffered him to run until so entirely out of breath. "I have promised thee thy freedom and life," said he, "but within twelve hours must thou leave my land; otherwise will I have thee hung." The slippers and cane, however, he commanded them to bear to his treasure-chamber.



Thus, poor as ever, wandered the little fellow forth through the land, cursing the folly which had led him astray, and prevented his playing an important part at court. The land from which he was banished, was fortunately not extensive, and accordingly eight hours brought him to the frontier; but travelling, now that he was used to his dear slippers, came very hard to him. Having arrived at the border, he chose the usual road for reaching the most lonely part of the forest, for he hated all men, and resolved to live there by himself. In a thick portion of the wood, he lighted on a place, which seemed to him quite suitable for the resolution he had taken. A clear brook, surrounded by large shady fig-trees, and a soft turf, invited him: he threw himself down, determined to taste food no more, but calmly to await his end. Amid his sorrowful reflections on death, he fell asleep; when he awoke, he was tormented by hunger, and began to think that starving to death was rather an unpleasant affair; so he looked around to find something to eat.



Fine ripe figs hung upon the tree beneath which he had slept; he stretched forth his hand to pluck some; their taste was delicious, and then he descended into the brook to slake his thirst. But what was his horror, when the water showed his head adorned with two immense ears, and a long thick nose! Amazed, he clapped his hands upon his ears, and they were really more than half an ell long.



"I deserve ass's ears!" he exclaimed; "for, like an ass, have I trodden Fortune under my feet." He wandered around among the trees, and feeling hunger again, was obliged to have recourse once more to the fig-tree, for he could find nothing else that was eatable. After the second portion of figs, it struck him that if his ears could find room beneath his large turban, he would not look so ridiculous, and, on trying it, he found that his ears had vanished. He ran straight back to the stream, in order to convince himself thereof; it was actually so; his ears had resumed their original figure, his long misshapen nose was no more! He soon perceived how all this had happened; from the first fig-tree he had received the long nose and ears, the second had relieved him of them: he saw with joy that kind destiny yet again placed in his hands the means of becoming fortunate. He plucked, therefore, from each tree as many figs as he could carry, and went back to the land which shortly before he had left. There, in the first town, he disguised himself by means of different garments; then, turning again to the city inhabited by the king, he soon arrived at it.



For about a year ripe fruit had been quite scarce; Little Muck, therefore, placed himself before the gate of the palace, for from his former residence there, it was well known to him, that here such rarities would be purchased by the kitchen-master for the royal table. Muck had not long been seated, when he saw that dignitary walking across the court-yard. He examined the articles of the traders who had placed themselves at the palace-gate; at length his eye fell upon Muck's little basket.



"Ah! a dainty morsel!" said he, "which will certainly please his majesty: what wish you for the whole basket?" Muck set a high price upon them, and the bargain was soon struck. The kitchen-master gave the basket to his slave, and went his way: meantime Little Muck stole away, for he feared, when the change should show itself on the heads of the court, that he, as the one who sold them, would be sought for punishment.

At table the king was well pleased, and praised his kitchen-master more than ever, on account of his good kitchen, and the care with which he always sought the rarest morsels for his table; the officer, however, who well knew what dainties he had in the back-ground, smiled pleasantly, and let fall but few words: "The day is not all past till evening," or "End good, all good;" so that the princesses were very curious to know what he would still bring on.



The moment, however, he had the fine, inviting figs set upon the table, a universal "Ah!" escaped the lips of those who were present. "How ripe! how delicate!" exclaimed the king; "kitchen-master, thou art a whole-souled man, and deserves our peculiar favour!" Thus speaking, the king, who with such choice dishes took care to be very sparing, with his own hands distributed the figs around the table. Each prince and princess received two; the ladies of the court, the Viziers and Agas, each one; the rest he placed before himself, and began to swallow them with great delight.

"In the name of heaven, father, why lookest thou so strange?" suddenly exclaimed the Princess Amarza. All gazed in astonishment upon the king; vast ears hung down from his head, a long nose stretched itself bridge-like, over above his chin; upon themselves also they looked, one upon another, with amazement and horror; all, more or less, were adorned with the same strange headdress.



The horror of the court may be imagined. All the physicians in the city were immediately sent for; they came with a blustering air, prescribed pills and mixtures, but ears and noses remained. They operated on one of the princes, but the ears grew out again.

From the place of concealment into which he had withdrawn, Muck had heard the whole story, and perceived that it was now time for him to commence operations. He had already, with the money obtained by the sale of his figs, procured a dress which would represent him as a learned man; a long beard of goat's hair completed the illusion. With a small sack full of figs he repaired to the royal palace, and offered his assistance as a foreign physician. At first they were quite incredulous; but when Little Muck gave a fig to one of the princes, and thereby restored ears and nose to their original shape, then were all eager to be cured by the stranger.



But the king took him silently by the hand, and led him to his apartment; then, opening a door that led into the treasure-chamber, he made signs to Muck to follow.

"Here are my treasures," said the king; "choose for thyself: whatever it may be, it shall be thine, if thou wilt free me from this shameful evil." This was sweet music in the ears of Little Muck: at the moment of entering he had seen his slippers standing upon the floor, and hard by lay his little staff.



He moved around the room, as if in wonder at the royal treasures; but no sooner had he reached his beloved shoes, than he hastily slipped into them, and seizing the little cane, tore off his false beard, and displayed to the astonished king the well-known countenance of his exiled Muck.

A man, with a long nose and ears (almost resembling a donkey), is running, arms raised above his head. "False king!" said he, "who rewardest faithful service with ingratitude, take, as well-deserved punishment, the deformity which thou now hast. The ears I leave thee, that, each day they may remind thee of Little Muck." Having thus spoken, he turned quickly around upon his heel, wished himself far away, and before the king could call for help Little Muck had vanished.



Ever since, he has lived here in great affluence, but alone, for men he despises. Experience has made him a wise man—one who, though there is something offensive in his exterior, deserves rather your admiration than your ridicule.

Such was my father's story. I assured him that I sincerely repented of my behaviour towards the good little man, and he remitted the other half of the punishment which he had intended for me. To my comrades I told the wonderful history of the dwarf, and we conceived such an affection for him, that no one insulted him anymore. On the contrary, we honoured him as long as he lived, and bowed as low to him as to Cadi or Mufti.